



Imagine This!!

# College Planning 101 for Parents

You are the most important and influential people in your children's lives. Your children need you to be interested and involved in their activities, their academic progress, and in the planning of their futures. During their high school years, your children also need you to take an active interest in their preparation and planning for college. As parents, there are many things you can do to insure that your children will be prepared for college. You can see that they take the appropriate courses, sign up for the right tests, and complete the necessary forms.

Colleges will use some, if not all, of the following information when determining whether or not to accept an applicant.

- 1. Grade Point Average (GPA)** – this is probably one of the most important criteria when considering a student's application. GPA is simply the average of a student's semester grades, starting with the freshman year.
- 2. Class Rank** – We use class rank to show where a student stands academically in relation to the other members of his/her graduating class. Rank can be particularly important when applying for scholarships because many scholarships stipulate that a student must be in the top 10% (or 20%, 25%, etc.) of his/her class.
- 3. Student Transcript** – A transcript is a document that details a student's academic achievement in high school. It includes courses, grades, and credits for each grade level completed, beginning with grade 9. It also contains the cumulative GPA, class rank and college entrance test scores such as the PSAT, ACT, SAT.
- 4. School Profile** – We also send a one-page document that includes pertinent information on the school and the community. It includes information on the size of the school, the percentage of students who go on to college, the average ACT and/or SAT scores of the previous graduating classes, information on how GPA is calculated, etc.
- 5. Strength of the Subjects** – Four-year colleges recommend students complete certain college preparatory courses while in high school. These generally include:
  - a. 4 years of English
  - b. 3 years of math (including Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II)
  - c. 3 years of science
  - d. 2-3 years of the same foreign language
  - e. 3 years of social studies
  - f. 1 year of fine arts

Students who do not have all of these courses may be required to take remedial and/or additional courses once they get to college. Students who have not taken several of these courses may want to consider starting at a community college, and then transferring to a four-year college after a year or two.

## 6. College Testing -

- a. PLAN - practice test for the ACT (test available to sophomores)
- b. PSAT/NMSQT – practice test for the SAT and also used to determine National Merit semi-finalists. It is given each October (primarily to juniors)
- c. SAT I – college entrance examination (generally taken during the junior and/or senior year.) Students receive a Verbal and a Math score.

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  - d. ACT – college entrance examination (generally taken during the junior and/or senior year.) Students receive scores in English, Reading, Math and Science Reasoning, as well as a Composite score.
  - e. SAT II: Subject Tests - one-hour tests that measure a student’s knowledge of specific subjects and his/her ability to apply that knowledge. Some colleges require these tests.

## **7. Recommendations, Activities/awards, Personal essays, Interviews**

College and Scholarship committees like to see students who are well rounded and active. Students who are involved in activities also seem to enjoy high school more and generally have greater academic success. In addition, many college and scholarship applications ask for evidence of leadership. If your son or daughter has leadership potential, encourage him/her to develop his/her leadership skills by being an officer of a club, captain of a team, squad leader in the band, etc. Depth of involvement in any activity (e.g., four years in band, soccer, etc.) is also important because it show focus and commitment.

Encourage your son or daughter to also participate in activities outside of school (e.g., church, scouting, recreational sports). Any type of volunteer work or community service is particularly impressive on an application. Summer activities can also be very worthwhile.

***Tip: During your son or daughter’s freshman year start keeping a file with lists and information on school activities, honors, awards, leadership positions, employment, volunteer work, community activities, etc. If you have a home computer, start an “Activities & Awards” file and update it once a year.***